

Washington, DC – Legislation sponsored by Congressman Harry Teague that would provide funding to clean up abandoned uranium mines across New Mexico has gained the support of a major New Mexico business group. Wednesday, the Association of Commerce and Industry of New Mexico (ACI) added their voice in support of the bill that would make additional Surface Mine and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) funds eligible for the remediation of old uranium mines and mills.

“Through an amendment to the SMCRA, New Mexico would be able to use monies for non-coal reclamation projects and dedicate those funds to clean up of abandoned uranium mines. This clean up would also help create shovel ready jobs in New Mexico,” wrote Dr. Beverly McClure, President and CEO of ACI, in a letter to Congressman Teague. “The ACI supports the proposed federal legislation and encourages you and all members of our delegation in Washington to seek passage of the SMCRA amendment.”

The bill, introduced last week, quickly won the backing of local leaders in southern New Mexico, including several Commissioners from Cibola County and the Governor of the Pueblo of Laguna.

“I’m pleased to see such a positive response from community and business leaders throughout southern New Mexico. We need to take this opportunity to clean up the legacy of New Mexico’s uranium mines while creating opportunities to put southern New Mexicans back to work,” said Congressman Harry Teague.

According to the Department of Interior, a state cannot currently use certain SMCRA funds for uranium site remediation until the state has certified that all coal remediation has been completed. Congressmen Teague, with Representatives Heinrich and Lujan, introduced the legislation to make all SMCRA funds available to uranium sites immediately because uranium clean-up is a bigger need in the state. If the bill were to pass it would make \$14.5 million in existing SMCRA funds available for use to clean the 137 uranium sites across the state that need remediation.